

# Rules of the Road

All travel on public roadways is controlled by a system of signs, signals, pavement markings, and driving laws. No matter what type of vehicle you are driving or what kind of road you are driving on, you *must* obey these “rules of the road.”

You must learn how to drive properly on

- Streets, roads, alleys, and avenues
- Traffic rotaries (circles)
- Highways, expressways, and freeways

You must also learn how to drive safely when you come upon

- Special crossings
- Intersections
- Traffic hazards

## CHAPTER 4

## Speed Limits

Driving too fast (speeding) is one of the major causes of motor vehicle crashes. Because it is a safety issue, speed laws in Massachusetts are strictly enforced and carry severe penalties (see *Chapter 2*). The faster you drive, the greater the distance you need to react to a situation and to stop your vehicle safely.



If you were driving 40 mph in a heavy rainstorm on a highway with a posted speed limit of 50 mph, you could be issued a citation for driving too fast for conditions.

1. The fundamental speed law for motor vehicles is that **you must never travel faster than is reasonable and proper for the current conditions and public safety.**

Regardless of what a posted speed limit sign says, how fast you drive *must* depend on several factors:

- **Traffic conditions**—number of vehicles on the road and the speeds at which they are traveling
- **Road conditions**—quality of the road surface (rough or smooth); the amount of water, ice, or snow on the road surface; and the width of the roadway
- **Weather conditions and visibility**—adverse situations, including rain, snow, ice, dust, and wind
- **Pedestrians or bicyclists**—people who might be traveling along or crossing the road

Again, regardless of any posted speed limit, you must decrease your speed if any hazard exists.

2. Never drive faster than the **posted speed limit**. Sample speed limit signs appear in the margins. All speed limits are based on ideal driving conditions. If conditions are hazardous, you must drive slower.



Most roadways in the state have posted speed limits. Be aware of changes in speed limits as you drive on different kinds of roads or enter and exit highways. Limited-access highways, like the interstate routes, have posted speed limits ranging from 50 to 65

mph, while smaller highways have limits of 55 mph or lower.

Also, be aware that some highways post **minimum** speed limits as well. In Massachusetts, the minimum speed on interstate and limited-access highways is 45 mph.

3. Unless posted otherwise, **your speed would not be considered reasonable and proper if you were driving over...**

- 20 mph in a school zone
- 30 mph in a thickly settled or business district
- 40 mph outside a thickly settled or business district
- 50 mph on a highway outside a thickly settled or business district

A “thickly settled district” is an area in which houses or other buildings are, on average, fewer than 200 feet apart.



### **School Zones**

The speed limit on roads near schools, 20 mph, can be posted in various ways. The signs stating such limits may be accompanied by flashing yellow lights or posted for certain hours of the day. Look closely for signs saying you are approaching or entering a school zone.

When entering a school zone, drive carefully. Be aware of children crossing the street or riding bicycles. Look out for school safety patrols or crossing guards.



## **Traffic Signals**

Traffic signals are lights that control the movement of vehicles and pedestrians, usually at intersections. You must know what each light means and obey its signals at all times.



### **Motor Vehicle Signals**

Traffic signals typically consist of three round lights: red, yellow, and green, from top to bottom. There are other types of signals, however, such as single flashing lights or colored arrows.



### ***Steady Red***

A steady red light means “stop.” Do not go until the light turns green. You may make a right turn on a red light *only* after coming to a complete stop, then yielding to pedestrians or other vehicles in your path. You may *not* turn on red if a **NO TURN ON RED** sign is posted.

If you are traveling on a one-way street and turning left onto another one-way street, you are allowed to turn left on a red light. Come to a complete stop and yield to pedestrians and other vehicles before turning.

### ***Steady Red Arrow***

A steady red arrow means the same as a steady red, circular signal (*see the preceding Steady Red section*), but a steady red arrow applies only to vehicles intending to proceed in the direction of the arrow. The same rules for “turning on red” apply.



### ***Flashing Red***

A flashing red light means the same as a **STOP** sign. Come to a complete stop. Obey the right-of-way laws and proceed when it is safe to do so. If a white stop line or crosswalk line is painted on the pavement, you must stop **before** the line. When there are no pavement markings you must stop as close to the intersection as needed to view traffic in both directions without entering the intersection.



### ***Steady Yellow***

A steady yellow light means the traffic signal is changing from green to red. You *must* stop if it is safe to do so. If you are already stopped at an intersection or a stop line, you may *not* proceed.



### ***Flashing Yellow***

A flashing yellow light is a warning. Proceed with caution, and stay alert. Look both ways when crossing an intersection.

## Steady Green

A steady green light means “go,” but only after you have yielded to other vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians in the road. If you are crossing an intersection, make sure you have enough room to make it completely through. Never block an intersection. You may make a turn as long as you have enough space to complete the turn and avoid creating a hazard. Look out for drivers who are not obeying traffic signals or are racing through intersections.



## Green Arrow

A green arrow means you may make a “protected” turn in the direction of the arrow. As long as a green arrow displays for your turning lane, pedestrians and oncoming vehicles should be stopped for red lights. Look closely for signs saying you may turn *only* when given the green arrow.



## Traffic Lights Not Working

If traffic signals are not working as they normally do, they will simply flash red or yellow lights. In these cases, follow the rules for flashing lights. If signals are blacked out and not functioning, you must treat the intersection as having stop signs in all directions. Proceed when it is safe to do so.



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## Pedestrian Signals

Special lighted signals are often used at crosswalks to indicate when pedestrians may cross a roadway. Pedestrians must obey the orange **DON'T WALK** and white **WALK** signals.

## Laws for Drivers

- You must yield to any pedestrians entering or using a crosswalk in your travel path.
- Never let your vehicle block a crosswalk.
- You must yield to pedestrians if your traffic signal is *red* or if it is *red* and *yellow*.
- Never pass a vehicle that has stopped or is slowing for a pedestrian.





## ***Laws for Pedestrians***

- Use a crosswalk if one is available.
- At crosswalks with pedestrian signals, use the push button on the signal pole and wait for the **WALK** signal. Intersections without push buttons will give you **WALK** signals automatically.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb and look left and right for traffic. *Be alert.* Look out especially for cars turning onto the road you are crossing.

## **Traffic Signs**

Traffic signs control the flow of traffic, warn you of hazards ahead, guide you to your destination, and inform you of roadway services. The shapes (see page 95) and colors of traffic signs are meaningful. Sign colors mean the following:

**RED**—stop or prohibition

**GREEN**—direction, shows where you can go

**YELLOW**—general warning

**BLACK/WHITE**—regulation

**BLUE**—motorist service (e.g., gas, food, hotels)

**BROWN**—recreational, historic, or scenic site

**ORANGE**—construction or maintenance warning

Know signs by their appearances so you can recognize them at a distance.

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## **Stop and Yield Signs**



The **STOP** sign always means “**come to a complete halt**” and applies to each vehicle that comes to the sign. You must stop before any crosswalk or stop line painted on the pavement. Come to a complete stop, yield to pedestrians or other vehicles, and proceed carefully. Simply slowing down is not enough. If a **4-WAY** or **ALL WAY** sign is added to a **STOP** sign at an intersection, all traffic approaching the

intersection must stop. The first vehicle in the intersection or four-way stop has the right of way.

When you see a **YIELD** sign, slow down and be prepared to stop. Let traffic, pedestrians, or bicycles pass before you enter the intersection or join another roadway. You must come to a complete stop if traffic conditions require it.



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## Regulatory Signs

The United States is now using an international system of traffic control signs that feature pictures and symbols rather than words. The red-and-white **YIELD** and **DO NOT ENTER** signs are examples, and you have probably seen signs that use a red circle with a diagonal slash. These signs prohibit access or movement. When you see one, think of the word *no*.



No right turn

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## Warning Signs

Yellow warning signs alert you to hazards or changes in conditions ahead. The road layout may be changing, you may be approaching a school zone, or you may need to be aware of some special situation ahead. Slow down and obey the sign. Disregarding a warning sign is not only dangerous, it is against the law.

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## Guide Signs

In the “guide signs” category you will find route markers, distance-and-destination signs, and informational signs. Green signs give highway directions and guide you through highway interchanges. Blue signs list motorist services, like gas, food, and lodging. Brown signs direct you to public recreational areas, state and national parks, historical points of interest, and scenic sites.

In Massachusetts, numbered state highway routes are posted on white, rectangular signs with black letters and borders. Interstate highway signs are blue, red, and white shields.

## Construction and Maintenance Road Work Warnings



Drum



Barricade



Tubular marker



Traffic cone

When people are repairing or constructing roadways, their work areas are protected from traffic by orange warning signs and other devices. These signs and devices may be mounted with warning flags or yellow flashing lights. These warnings help to guide pedestrians and vehicle traffic safely through a work zone and past any hazards.

Many of these warning signs use the same symbols as yellow warning signs, but you should take extra care when orange signs are posted. Traffic and road conditions around work zones often change quickly.

In addition to posting orange warning signs, road work crews can use a number of “channeling” devices to keep traffic in lanes and away from hazards. Sometimes, electric warning arrow signs will direct traffic flow near a work zone.

*Continued on Page 97*



Lighted directional signs

### Know traffic signs by their shapes



Stop



School Zone



Guide/Information



Yield



Regulation



No Passing Zone



Warning



Railroad Crossing



Interstate Highway



## Regulatory



No right turn



No left turn



No U-turn



All traffic must go left



Keep to the right of the upcoming median or lane divider



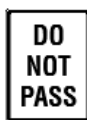
No trucks



No bicycles



Traffic moves only in direction of arrow



You may not overtake another vehicle



You may not turn right after stopping at a red light



No pedestrians



No parking allowed between posted hours

## Warning



Traffic signal ahead



Stop ahead



Road curves right



Winding road, do not pass



Crossroad ahead



Road entering from the right



Road ends at junction



Lane merging from right, watch for other traffic



Road narrows or right lane ends



Road slippery when wet



Area off paved road is soft dirt and could be hazardous



Pedestrian crossing



Deer crossing



Traffic may flow on both sides of sign



School zone



School crossing



Maximum height allowed



Divided high-way begins



Divided high-way ends



You may not cross the yellow line to pass



Playground

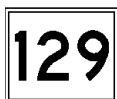


Two-way traffic

## Guides and Directions



Interstate  
highway  
route marker



Massachusetts  
state highway  
route marker



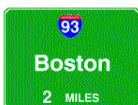
Junction with  
a numbered  
route ahead



Destination  
directions



Destination  
distances, in miles



Notice of  
highway exits,  
in miles



Information



Hospital



Telephone



Access for those  
with disabilities



Highway rest area



Highway mile  
markers



Parking  
facilities



Gas



Lodging



Food



Picnic area



Motorist services



Point of interest



Freeway interchange sign

## Road Work



Road crew flag  
person ahead



Work in  
progress on the  
side of the road



Maintenance  
or public utility  
crew ahead



Notice



Roadway detour  
directions

When a flag person or police officer is directing traffic around a work zone, you *must* obey the flagger's or officer's signals or directions.

## Railroad Crossings

A round warning sign will usually alert you to an upcoming railroad crossing. When you see this sign, slow down and prepare to stop. If you see or hear a train approaching, do *not* speed up and try to beat the train to the crossing.

The point at which train tracks cross a road is marked with a white crossbuck sign. If more than one track crosses a road, the number of tracks is posted below the crossbuck.

A railroad crossing may also feature red flashing lights, a bell, and a red-and-white striped gate that is lowered across the roadway when a train is passing. If the lights begin to flash, you *must* stop at least 15 feet before the light post or gate and remain stopped until the gate raises and the lights stop flashing. Failure to stop is a violation that carries a heavy fine. Even if you do not see a train approaching, *never* drive around a lowered gate or ignore the flashing lights.



Work zone flag person



Railroad crossing ahead



Railroad crossbuck

## Pavement Markings

Lines, symbols, and words are often painted on a roadway to help direct drivers and control traffic flow. You must know what the different lines and colors mean and obey them as you would traffic signs or signals.

White and yellow lines are used along pavement edges and between lanes to keep vehicles in line. These lines may be solid or broken (long dashes), single or double. A solid white or solid yellow line that turns into a dotted line (short dashes) is simply a continuation of the line through an intersection or a highway interchange.

Unless you are turning, exiting a highway, or changing lanes, always stay between the lines marking your lane.

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## White Lane Lines

White lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in the **same** direction. Single white lines may also mark the right edge of the pavement.

### ***Broken White Line***

A broken white line separates two lanes traveling in the same direction. Once you have signaled, and if it is safe to do so, you may cross this line when changing lanes.

Broken white lines separate lanes in the same direction.



### ***Solid White Line***

A solid white line marks the right edge of the roadway or separates lanes of traffic moving in the same direction. You may travel in the same direction on both sides of this line, but you should not cross the line unless you must do so to avoid a hazard.

### ***Double Solid White Line***

A double solid white line separates two lanes of traffic going in the same direction. Crossing a double solid white line is prohibited.

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## Yellow Lane Lines

Yellow lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in **opposite** directions. Single yellow lines may also mark the left edge of the pavement on divided highways and one-way streets.

## **Broken Yellow Line**

A broken yellow line separates lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions. Stay to the right of the line, unless you are passing a vehicle in front of you. When passing, you may cross this line temporarily when it is safe to do so.



## **Double Yellow Lines: One Solid, One Broken**

As with all yellow lines, the one-solid-one-broken combination keeps opposing lanes of traffic separated. If the *solid* yellow line is closer to you, you may *not* cross the double yellow line. If the *broken* line is closer to you, you can cross the line *only* to pass another vehicle and *only* when it is safe to do so.



## **Double Yellow Lines: Both Solid**

Two solid yellow lines prohibit vehicles moving in either direction from crossing the lines to pass another vehicle. You may not cross these lines unless turning left when it is safe to do so.



Do *not* cross a double yellow line unless turning left.

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## **Words and Symbols**

Words or symbols may be painted on roadway surfaces to help guide, warn, or regulate drivers. Words or symbols are often used with traffic signs, signals, and other pavement markings. White arrows show lane directions or restrictions.

In the accompanying three-lane diagram, the far left travel lane is reserved for buses or high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs), like those used in carpools.



A white diamond alerts you to a special lane restriction, like “high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) only,” “bus only,” or “bicycle only.”

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## Stop Lines and Crosswalks

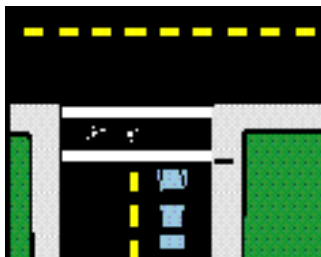
You must stop *behind* stop lines and crosswalk lines if required to stop by a sign or signal.

An intersection or a pedestrian crossing controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, traffic signal, or traffic officer may have a solid white **STOP** line painted across it. You must stop your vehicle behind this line.

A crosswalk is a pair of white lines painted across a lane that guides pedestrians from one side of the road to the other. A painted crosswalk is also a warning to drivers that pedestrians are crossing the road at that point. Crosswalks may have diagonal or vertical lines painted between the two main lines for added emphasis.



Stop line



Crosswalk

## Lanes, Intersections, and Turns

This section explains the rules of driving that apply to any roadway or intersection. In addition to standard travel lanes, there are...

- Special lanes for turning
- Restricted lanes for buses, car pools, and bicycles

- Breakdown lanes on the right-hand shoulder of highways and expressways

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## Signaling

Unless you indicate otherwise, other people using the roadway you are on expect you to travel straight ahead. This is why you must use signals whenever you make *any* move in traffic. Your signals notify pedestrians and other motorists of your intended moves and give them time to react.

Regardless of the kind of vehicle you are driving, you *must* use signals. If the electronic signals on your vehicle are not working, you must use the three hand signals shown in the margin. Signals should be made through the driver's side window.

You must signal in certain situations:

- Changing lanes
- Turning at an intersection or into a driveway
- Pulling away from a curb
- Pulling over to the side of the road
- Entering or exiting an expressway or a freeway

Once you have completed your move, you must turn your signal off. Any time you want to turn, merge, join traffic from a stopped position, or change lanes, you must...

1. Check your mirrors for traffic behind you and check your blind spot on the side you are moving or turning toward.
2. Signal your intent to move.
3. Make your move.

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## Using Lanes

Always use traffic lanes as they are defined by pavement markings and road signs. Many intersections have special lanes marked for turns. Follow the rules of the road, using the proper lanes for turning and driving straight ahead.

On roadways with two or more lanes in your



Bicyclists may use either arm to signal.

travel direction, use the right lane for driving unless...

- You are passing another vehicle.
- You are making a left turn.
- The right lane is blocked.

Here are a few more general rules for using lanes properly:

- Never change lanes in the middle of an intersection. It is illegal and dangerous.
- As a general rule, do *not* use a highway breakdown lane as a travel or passing lane. On some highways, however, motorists may use the breakdown lane as a travel lane during specific times.
- If you come to a curve in the road and cannot see ahead, keep to the right and slow down.

Special rules for motorcycles:

- Do *not* ride along pavement lines, between lanes of traffic.
- Ride no more than two abreast.
- Unless your motorcycle can travel safely at minimum posted speeds, do not travel on highways or expressways.

### ***Restricted Lanes***

You must not drive in lanes posted as restricted, except when preparing for a turn. Look for signs like the one in the margin.



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## **Highway Driving**

A divided highway has separate roadways for traffic in opposite directions, often with multiple lanes on each side. Typically, highway speed limits range from 45 to 65 mph.

Some highways intersect other roads and are controlled by traffic signals. Others are “controlled access,” which means they have no signals or intersections; you enter and exit these highways using ramps. Such highways are called “expressways” or “freeways,” and the

The use of breakdown lanes as travel lanes is *very* restricted, and hours of use are posted clearly.



points at which you can enter or exit the highways are known as “interchanges.” In Massachusetts, interstate Routes 90 and 495 and State Highway 128 are examples of expressways.

Highway driving can make any new driver nervous. Following are some useful tips for driving on highways:

### ***Entering and Exiting the Highway***

- Make sure you are in the proper lane well in advance so you can safely enter or exit the highway.
- Yield the right-of-way to drivers already on the highway.
- As you approach and enter a highway travel lane, increase your speed to match that of vehicles already on the road.
- **If you miss your exit, do *not* stop. Never back up on the highway.** Get off the highway at the **next** exit and look for signs showing you how to rejoin the road in the other direction.
- Be sure to signal your exit at least 500 feet before you reach the exit ramp.
- As you leave the highway and drive along the exit ramp, slow to the posted exit ramp speed limit.

Take extra care when exiting a highway on which breakdown lanes are being used as travel lanes. Look to your right and check your right-hand blind spot before exiting.

### ***Driving on the Highway***

- Make sure your vehicle is in good operating order and can maintain highway speeds.
- Stay to the right and only use the left lane for passing. If you are traveling on an expressway with three lanes, treat the far right lane as a slower-speed through lane, the middle lane as a faster through lane, and the far left lane as the passing lane.
- Drive in the middle of your lane, staying between the lines.
- Use your rearview mirror and your directional signals when changing lanes. Remember these three steps: **(1) look, (2) signal,**

**(3) move.** Also, check your blind spots before making your move.

- Do not drive in another driver's blind spot. If you see yourself in another driver's blind spot, safely drive through the blind spot as quickly as you can.
- Be alert for cars entering the highway and any vehicles or pedestrians using the breakdown lane.
- Do *not* weave in and out of traffic.
- Be aware of road construction signs, work crews, and signs requiring you to reduce speed or change lanes.
- Avoid "highway hypnosis." If you've been driving for a long period and feel drowsy, you should get off the highway at the next exit, rest stop, or service area.
- If you plan to drive a long distance, stop and stretch at least after every 2 hours or every 100 miles.

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## Intersections

Intersections are the points at which any two or more roadways meet. Traffic flow through these meeting points is often controlled by signals, signs, and/or pavement markings. The next two sections in this chapter, *Turns* and *Right-of-Way Rules*, describe the very specific rules and procedures you must follow when driving through intersections.

Some roads have multiple turning lanes. While on these roads, you should follow the applicable road signs or markings.

Because the actions of drivers at intersections are so important to the general flow and safety of traffic, **it is illegal to block an intersection with your vehicle.** When driving through an intersection, you must follow any directions given to you by signs or traffic signals. **However, you may *not* enter an intersection or drive across a crosswalk unless there is enough room for you to drive through to the other side safely. Obstructing the paths of other vehicles or pedestrians in an intersection or a crosswalk causes traffic jams and violates traffic law.**

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## Turns

Many motor vehicle crashes are caused by improper turns. In general, take the following steps to turn safely:

1. Plan for the turn. Do not turn suddenly.
2. Signal your turn at least 100 feet before making the turn. On a highway, signal at least 500 feet before a turn. It is best to signal before you apply your brakes, so you make your intentions known to other drivers.
3. Reduce your speed.
4. Check your mirrors for traffic behind you and check the blind spot on your turning side.
5. Give the right-of-way when necessary (see the *Right-of-Way Rules* section following).
6. Complete the turn carefully, making sure you turn into the proper lane.

The road diagrams on this and the following page show examples of proper turns. It is very important that you turn from and turn into the proper lane. Be aware of yellow or white pavement lines marking the road you are turning into. If you need to change lanes, do so *after* you turn. Here are a few rules:

- Turn from the lane closest to the lane you want to enter. For a right turn, turn from the far right lane. For a left turn, turn from the lane closest to the center lane.
- Do not swing your vehicle out of your lane when making a turn or swing wide through the intersection. Keep your vehicle balanced in the middle of the lanes you are leaving and entering.
- Once you have started a turn through an intersection, you must follow through. Do *not* stop in mid-turn and change direction. If you decide you do not want to make the turn, simply drive to the next intersection and work your way back.



The accompanying diagram shows the “blind spots” around your vehicle, in which you cannot see with your vehicle’s mirrors.

## Turns on Red

After coming to a complete stop at a red traffic light, you are allowed to turn *right* on red after giving the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles, unless a **NO TURN ON RED** sign is posted. You may turn *left* on red following the same rules *only* if you are turning from a one-way street onto another one-way street.



Right turn



Left turn from a two-way road to a two-way road



Left turn from a two-way road to a one-way road



Left turn from a one-way road to a two-way road

## U-Turns

A U-turn is a tight left turn that puts you in the opposite direction in which you were just traveling.

Unless a **NO U-TURN** sign is posted, you are allowed to make a U-turn as long as your path is clear and it is safe to do so.



- You may only make a U-turn from the lane closest to the center line.
- Make sure you have enough room to complete the turn. Do not create a hazard for oncoming vehicles.
- Do not attempt a U-turn at the crest of a hill, near a curve, or at any other point at which you or other drivers cannot see from 500 feet away.

## Left Turns from Center Lanes

On some two-way roads, a center lane may be marked as a common left-turn lane to be used by vehicles in both directions. You may *not* travel in a center turning lane.



## Right-of-Way Rules

So-called “right-of-way rules” help drivers decide how to handle traffic situations that are not determined entirely by signs or signals. These rules are based on safety and courtesy; they do not give you any “rights.” **Remember, the right-of-way is something you give, not take.** If another driver fails to follow these rules in a certain situation, you should always give the right-of-way for safety’s sake.

This section summarizes many right-of-way rules. Other related rules, like giving the right-of-way to emergency vehicles, are presented in the appropriate sections of this chapter.

## Pedestrians

You must always yield to pedestrians who are walking in or crossing a roadway. Also note these rules concerning pedestrians:

- If you are stopped at a traffic signal and the light turns green, you must yield to any pedestrians already in the crosswalk before proceeding.
- When turning, look for pedestrians crossing your intended path. Pedestrians have the right-of-way if using a sidewalk or crossing a driveway or an alley.
- Always yield to blind people crossing a street. If a blind person using a special cane or a guide dog is trying to cross the street, you must stop until the person has crossed safely to the other side.



## ***Intersections Not Controlled by Signs or Signals***

If you come to an uncontrolled intersection, slow down, look left and right for oncoming traffic, and proceed if the way is clear. However,

- You *must* yield the right-of-way to any vehicle that has entered the intersection from your *right* or is approaching from your right.
- Look for any traffic approaching from the left. Even though you may have the legal right-of-way, make sure that the other driver is yielding to you before you proceed.

## ***Four-Way Stop***

At an intersection controlled by stop signs in all directions, you must yield the right-of-way to...

- Another vehicle that has **already** come to a full stop at the intersection
- A vehicle on your immediate *right* that has stopped at the intersection at the **same time** as you



At a four-way stop, vehicles must proceed in the order they stopped. The first to stop is the next to go. If in doubt, give the right-of-way to the driver on your right.

Confusion can develop at four-way stop intersections. You should try to make eye contact with the drivers of other vehicles at the intersection to better judge their intentions and avoid accidents.

## ***Turning Left***

When making *any* left turn, you must first yield the right-of-way to any...

- Oncoming vehicle
- Vehicle already in the intersection
- Pedestrians or bicyclists crossing your intended path of travel

## ***Private Roads, Driveways, and Unpaved Roads***

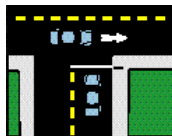
If you are entering a paved thoroughfare from a private road, a driveway, or an unpaved road, you *must* stop first and give the right-of-way to pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles traveling along the road you are entering.

## Throughways

If you approach a designated throughway, you must yield the right-of-way to traffic on the throughway before you turn.

## Intersection of Single or Two-Lane Road and Multiple-Lane Road

If you are traveling on a single or two-lane road and come to an intersection with a larger road, you must yield the right-of-way to vehicles driving on a divided highway or a roadway with three or more lanes.



You must give the right-of-way at throughways.

## Rotaries

Because only a few states in America have traffic rotaries (traffic circles), many drivers are unfamiliar with rotaries' right-of-way rules. Be especially careful and generous when extending the right-of-way to other drivers in and near rotaries. When you approach a rotary, you must yield the right-of-way to any vehicles already in the rotary. If traffic in the rotary is heavy, stop at the edge of the rotary and wait until you can enter safely.

Traffic in a rotary circles counter-clockwise.

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## Rules for Passing

In general, the law requires you to drive on the right side of the road. When passing is allowed, you should pass on the left. Passing on the right is allowed only in certain situations.

You should pass a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motor vehicle *only* when it is necessary and safe to do so. **You may not exceed the speed limit when passing.** If you have any doubt, do not pass.

*Never* use a breakdown lane, the shoulder of a road, or a sidewalk for passing another vehicle.

### Passing on the Left

On a multiple-lane roadway with several lanes in one direction, you must use the middle and left lanes for passing. A broken yellow line on a two-way road allows you to cross over into the oncoming lane temporarily to pass a vehicle in front of you, **if it is safe to do so**. The following numbered steps correspond to the diagram in the margin:





1. Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle you intend to pass. Check the passing lane to make sure it is clear. If you are crossing a broken yellow line to pass, you must be able to see clearly **at least 400 feet** in front of you. Check your mirror and your blind spot.
2. Signal left and gradually move into the passing lane.
3. Maintain your speed until safely past the other vehicle, then signal right.
4. Make sure there is enough distance between you and the other vehicle before moving back into the right lane. Wait at least until you can see the vehicle's headlights in your mirror.
5. You must return to the right lane before any oncoming vehicle comes within 200 feet of you. Turn off your signal once you have returned to the right lane.

### ***Passing on the Right***

Passing on the right is permitted only in certain circumstances:

- On a multiple-lane highway that is divided by a barrier or a median
- On a one-way street with two or more lanes
- When a vehicle in the left lane is turning left or preparing to turn left

### ***Being Passed***

If you are being passed by another vehicle, you must slow down and stay to the right. Allow the other driver to pass safely. Do *not* speed up.

If you are operating a motorcycle, you may only pass single file.



## Road Respect/Sharing the Road

The Governor's Highway Safety Bureau has a program entitled, "Road Respect-Tame the Rage," which is enforced by the RMV and the Massachusetts State Police. The premise is that a little courtesy will not kill you and it will go a long way towards increasing safety on our roads. We ask that you show respect for those you share the roadway with. Do not let your anger get the best of you when someone else drives irresponsibly.

### *How Can You Identify Aggressive Drivers?*

Aggressive Drivers typically exhibit many of these tendencies:

Cutting people off

Exceeding the speed limit

Switching lanes without signaling

Tailgating

Running red lights

Preventing other motorists from passing them

### *What Can You Do When confronted by an Aggressive Driver?*

Attempt to get out of his/her way.

Do not challenge that person.

Avoid eye contact.

Ignore rude gestures.

Wear your safety belt; it will keep you in control of your vehicle and protect you in the event of a crash.

### *Do not become an Aggressive Driver!*

Control your anger and do not let the situation escalate.

Never underestimate the other driver's potential for aggression.

If you have a cellular phone, call State Police at \*77 to report dangerous drivers.

As part of this program, special State Police teams are patrolling the highways in unmarked vehicles. They are looking for **aggressive drivers** who endanger themselves and everyone else on the road. If you are stopped and cited for

conduct that can constitute **aggressive driving**, the Registrar may be asked to review the evidence in your case. If your driving is found to be so dangerous that allowing you to continue would pose an immediate threat to public safety, he/she has the ability to suspend or revoke your license and registration long before a scheduled court date.

Be a safe driver, be courteous, and always treat other drivers as you would like to be treated. As the driver of a passenger car, van, small truck, or motorcycle, you must constantly share the roadway with other people and other vehicles.

### ***School Buses***

Yellow school buses have flashing red lights and stop signs that fold out from the driver's side. School pupil transport vehicles, like vans, station wagons, or family sedans, have flashing red lights and **SCHOOL BUS** signs on top. Drivers of either kind of school vehicle use these warning signals when letting pupils on and off.



Obey school bus signals from either side of the road.

**No matter which side of the road you are traveling on, if you come upon a school bus or a school pupil transport vehicle with its lights flashing and a stop sign extended, you *must* stop. It is the law. Remain stopped until the lights stop flashing or the stop sign folds back.**

Violation of this law can result in license suspension and fines of up to \$200.

Even after the warning signals have stopped, you should proceed slowly and continue to look around for children.

The only exception to this law is if a school bus has stopped on the other side of a divided

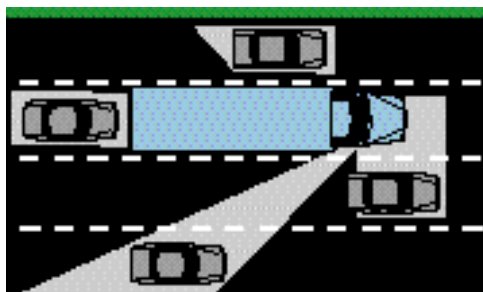
highway with a barrier between travel directions. In this case, you do not have to stop.

## ***Trucks and Other Large Vehicles***

One of the most serious “sharing-the-road” problems occurs between large vehicles, like trucks and buses, and smaller ones, like cars and motorcycles. Several organizations have started campaigns to educate each group of drivers about the other. Following are a few rules for driving safely among trucks, tractor-trailers, and buses:



- **Blind Spots**—Although most large vehicles have several rearview mirrors, it is easy for a car or a motorcycle to be hidden in a large vehicle’s blind spot. Therefore, do *not* follow closely behind a truck or a bus. When driving near a large vehicle, be aware of the driver’s blind spots on the right, left, front, and behind



Blind spots on a large tractor-trailer can extend up to 20 feet in front of the vehicle and 200 feet behind.

- **Tailgating**—If you cannot see a truck’s rearview mirrors, you are tailgating. Tailgating is dangerous. By following too closely, you are eliminating the cushion of safety you need if the vehicle in front of you stops short.
- **Cutting in Front**—Drivers of large vehicles try to keep a safety cushion of space around them. Depending on conditions, a large truck may need twice as much distance to stop as an automobile or a motorcycle, especially when roads are wet or icy. In general, do not drive into the space immediately surrounding a large vehicle. Do *not* pull in front of a large vehicle and slow down or stop suddenly. The driver will have too little room to stop and will

According to studies by the National Safety Council and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a fully loaded tractor trailer may require more than *twice* the distance to stop than does a passenger vehicle.

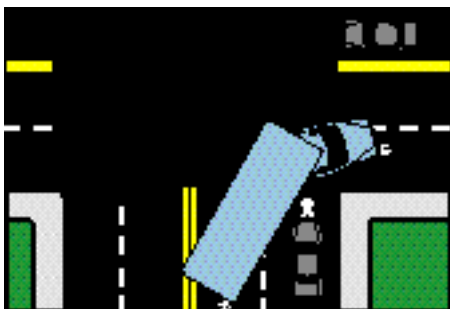
crash into you or may risk “jackknifing” by trying to stop suddenly at highway speeds.

- **Driving Too Slowly**—On a multiple-lane highway, trucks and buses are restricted to driving in the two right-hand lanes. They use the far right lane for normal travel and the second lane as a passing lane. If you are traveling in the second lane, stay with the flow of traffic and avoid driving below the speed limit.

By driving too slowly in this lane, you can create a bottleneck of large vehicles, which can increase highway traffic hazards. If a truck or bus wants to pass you, move over when it is safe to do so and let the vehicle pass.

- **Passing on the Left**—Remember that it takes longer to pass a tractor-trailer or a bus than it does to pass another car or a motorcycle. Also be aware that large vehicles tend to travel more slowly uphill and faster downhill.
- **Passing on the Right**—Do not pass a truck or bus on the right unless it is absolutely necessary. Large vehicles often make wide turns, and sometimes they must move to the *left* before making a wide turn to the *right*. If you are driving alongside a truck or bus, you are most likely driving in a blind spot. Watch for possible right-hand turns, and stay safely behind until you are sure what the driver is doing.

If you are thinking about passing, remember that a tractor may be pulling more than one trailer.



- **Truck or Bus Approaching**—If a large vehicle is coming toward you on an undivided road, stay to the right to avoid being sideswiped or shaken by air turbulence. At intersections, take extra care in judging the speed of the oncoming vehicle. Trucks and buses cannot slow down easily if you cut in front of them to turn.

## ***Buses and Trolleys***

Especially in urban areas, you must take extra care when driving near public transport buses and trolleys. Buses stop frequently. Be courteous and make way for buses signaling to pull away from bus stops.



State law is very specific about driving near trolleys and their tracks:

- If you come to a trolley letting passengers on or off, you must *not* drive any closer than within 8 feet of the trolley passenger step.
- Look for oncoming trolleys before crossing any tracks. Do *not* turn in front of a trolley if one is approaching.
- Maintain a safe distance between your vehicle and a trolley if the trolley is sharing the roadway.

Remember, a trolley's path is limited to the tracks. A trolley driver cannot swerve to avoid **you**.

## ***Slow-Moving Vehicles***

Most farm vehicles, construction rigs, and other slow-moving vehicles have orange warning signs mounted at the rear of the vehicle. If you approach such a vehicle, reduce your speed and use the same caution you would with bicyclists and pedestrians. Allow plenty of space around the vehicle if you plan to pass.

## ***Funeral Processions***

If you meet a funeral procession on a roadway, you *must* yield the right-of-way until all vehicles in the procession have passed. **It is illegal to cut through or disrupt any vehicles in a funeral procession.**

## ROAD WORK NEXT 5 MILES



The law applies to horses, cows, and any other draft animals.

### ***Road Workers and Repair Crews***

Although road construction and maintenance sites are often well posted with warning signs, you must take extra care to ensure the safety of anyone working on a roadway. Orange warning signs and work equipment usually mean that people are on foot nearby. Follow road work signs carefully, and stay alert. Look for sudden changes in road direction or condition. Be prepared to stop. If you are cited for speeding in a “work area”, you will pay “double” the appropriate fine.

### ***Animals and Horse-Drawn Vehicles***

Always give the right-of-way to any animal that someone is leading, riding, or driving. Animals are easily frightened by motor vehicles, so when you approach any animal or horse-drawn vehicle, remember to be careful:

- Slow down.
- If the animal or vehicle is coming toward you or is crossing your path, stop and allow the animal to pass.
- If the animal or vehicle is traveling in the same direction you are, allow plenty of room for passing safely, and use reasonable speed.
- Do not sound your horn or make a loud noise.
- If the animal you are passing appears frightened, you must pull your vehicle to the roadside and stop.
- Proceed only when it is safe.
- You must stop if a rider or driver signals you to do so.

In rural areas, take extra care when passing “hay rides,” which are usually animal drawn and full of passengers.

## **Parking**

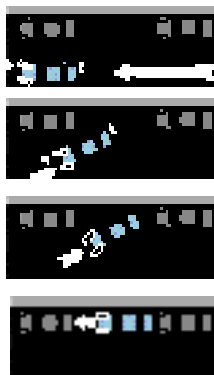
Stopping and parking your motor vehicle is regulated to ensure safety and a smooth traffic flow. You should practice parking maneuvers and know the laws that govern parking.

Here are some general rules about stopping and parking:

- You must not create a traffic hazard while parking or while your vehicle is stopped.
- You must always make sure that you leave at least a 12-foot wide, unobstructed roadway for traffic to pass in either direction.
- When you leave your vehicle unattended, state law requires you to stop the motor, set the brake, make sure the ignition is locked, remove your ignition key, and lock the door.
- When you pull away from the curb, you must wait for vehicles in the travel lane to pass, signal your intention to pull out, and move slowly into traffic.

### ***Parallel Parking***

1. Choose a space on the roadside that is long enough for your vehicle. Make sure parking is legal.
2. Pull up alongside the vehicle in front of the space, leaving about 2 or 3 feet between your vehicle and the parked one. Position your vehicle so that your rear bumper or front seats align with the rear bumper or front seats respectively of the other vehicle.
3. Look behind you *both* ways to see if your path is clear of pedestrians and other traffic.
4. Slowly back up and turn the steering wheel all the way toward the curb. Rest your foot lightly on the brake. Look directly out your rear window. Do *not* use your mirrors.
5. When your front passes the parked vehicle's rear bumper, turn your steering the opposite way and continue backing up. Do not hit the vehicle behind you.
6. When you are back far enough, straighten your wheels and pull forward. Make sure you keep enough space in front of and behind you so that other vehicles can get out.



The steps in parallel parking



## Parking on Hills

Always set your parking brake and leave your vehicle in gear when parking on a hill if you have a manual transmission. If you have an automatic transmission, set your parking brake and shift into park. In case the brake fails while your vehicle is parked, you must turn your front wheels in the proper direction to prevent it from rolling downhill.



- **No Curb**—Turn your wheels *inward*, toward the edge of the road.
- **Uphill Against a Curb**—Turn your wheels *outward*, toward the travel lane.
- **Downhill Against a Curb**—Turn your wheels *inward*, toward the curb.

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## Parking Regulations

Parking regulations are generally determined by state law but are enforced by local cities and towns. If you are parking in a business or residential district, you must position your vehicle within 12 inches of the curb, except where angled parking is allowed. Parking spaces on roadway edges are often marked by white road lines. You must park your vehicle between these lines, not straddling two spaces. In Massachusetts, you may *not* park your vehicle in certain places:

- In a zone posted with a NO PARKING, NO STANDING, or NO STOPPING sign
- In a bus stop or taxi stand
- In a zone and at a time posted for street cleaning
- In a posted loading zone
- Within 20 feet of an intersection
- In a crosswalk, in front of a driveway, or in front of a handicap-access ramp



- In a zone posted for HP-DV parking only (disabled person plates or placards, disabled veteran plates). Violating this parking regulation carries a heavy fine.
- Within 10 feet of a fire hydrant or fire lane
- On a sidewalk, curb, center traffic island, or median
- During a weather or roadway emergency
- Facing the wrong way against traffic
- On a state or an interstate highway, unless authorized
- On a roadway in a rural area or outside a thickly settled district
- In a traffic lane next to a row of parked vehicles ("double parked")
- To make nonemergency repairs to your vehicle

If you violate a parking regulation, you may receive a citation with a fine. Remember, unpaid parking tickets can prevent you from renewing your license or vehicle registration.

### ***Parking Meters***

Many public parking spaces are regulated by coin-fed meters. Meter regulations are usually in effect during posted days and hours. In most areas, a maximum time limit is also posted.

If you exceed the limit or fail to pay the meter fee, you may be issued a parking citation.

### ***Parking Permits***

Many cities and towns in the state issue special parking permits to residents. Certain residential streets have **RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING ONLY** signs. If you do not have a permit or a special visitor's placard, you may not park in these zones. Contact your local community for information on obtaining a permit.

## Miscellaneous Rules of the Road

Following are motor vehicle traffic laws that have not been covered in a specific section. **It is illegal to...**

- Drive on a bet or wager
- Engage in drag racing
- Throw garbage or glass onto a roadway or onto public or private land
- Throw lighted cigarettes or anything else from a motor vehicle that can cause a fire near a forest or open field
- Bypass or cut out a motor vehicle's muffler system

By law, you should return used motor oil, transmission fluid, and other hazardous materials to the place you bought the materials. The garage or store that sold you the goods is responsible for disposing of the goods.

## Rules for Pedestrians

When you are a pedestrian, you must remember the following rules:



- State law requires you to use a crosswalk when one is available. When crossing at an intersection with a traffic signal, use the pedestrian button and wait for the **WALK** signal. Intersections without push buttons automatically give you **WALK** signals. Be patient!
- If the crossing signal flashes **DON'T WALK**, do not begin crossing. If the signal stops flashing and stays steady, you may not cross.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb, look left, look right, and look left again for traffic—even if it is a one-way street. Be alert while crossing. Be especially alert at intersections that allow motor vehicles to turn right on red.
- If you must enter the street from between parked cars, stop and look before crossing.

- You must use a sidewalk when one is available. When no sidewalk is available on a local roadway, you should walk on the shoulder **facing** traffic.
- Never walk along or across expressways, interstate highways, or turnpikes.
- Wear clothing with bright colors or reflective strips, especially at night.

## Rules for Bicyclists

When you are riding a bicycle on public ways, state law subjects you to the same basic laws and regulations that apply to motor vehicle operators.

- You must obey all traffic signs and signals, ride single file with the flow of traffic, and yield to pedestrians.
- You must ride on the right side of the roadway, unless you are turning left. To turn left, signal, look, and move into the lane closest to the center line.
- It is strongly recommended that you avoid listening to headphones while riding.
- Before entering or crossing a roadway, you should stop, look left, look right, and look left again for traffic—even if it is a one-way street.
- When stopping, turning, or passing, you should use hand signals and an audible warning to communicate your intentions to pedestrians and other roadway users. You may use either hand to signal.
- You and your bike must have proper lights and reflectors when operating at night.
- You may use sidewalks outside business districts, unless there is a local ordinance prohibiting it.
- When operating on a sidewalk, you must yield the right of way to pedestrians.



About 75% of bicycle-related deaths and disabling injuries could have been prevented if riders wore a proper bike helmet.

For a free brochure with additional bicycle safety tips, call the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau at 617-973-8900.

**State law requires that all bicyclists 16 years of age or younger must wear approved helmets when bicycling or riding as passengers on public ways or property.** A properly fitted and fastened helmet sits just above the eyebrows. As an adult, you can set an important example for children by always wearing a helmet when cycling.